

**California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley  
Tulare County Public Forum  
Visalia, CA – March 10, 2006**

**Member Testimony**

Assemblyman Bill Maze

- The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley (Partnership) will help bring California back to a great status
- Taxes and regulations are not the solution to the problems of California
- Solutions to education, water and transportation should be reasonable and manageable

Assemblyman Juan Arambula

- Money needs to be sent to the San Joaquin Valley to fix water and transportation
- The San Joaquin Valley (Valley) has a negative image in California
- Californians need to know the Valley is an integral part to the State
- Voiced support for the Partnership because it puts a spot light on the Valley
- The Partnership needs to continue after the Executive Order ends

**Government Panel**

Steve Worthley - Chairman Tulare County Board of Supervisors

- Avoid a command and control type of system
- There needs to be an equitable redistribution of resources
  - For example, goods don't stop at the ports
  - The Valley shares the same air as other Californians so the resources should be the same
- California is communal and distribution should not be based on a per capita basis
- Problems in the Valley are similar to the rest of California and the Valley should have the adequate resources to solve the problems

Mayor Richard Ortega - City of Tulare

- There are many problems in the Valley and choosing the most important ones are difficult
- Thanked the Governor for bringing the Valley together
- The Partnership needs to continue past the November date
- Top priorities for the Valley:
  - Highway 99
  - Water
  - Levees
- Creation of jobs is vital to the Valley
  - The population growth in the Valley will only cause more strain on the job market

- Education is necessary to create a desirable workforce
  - Focus on the vocational education programs
  - Referred to an Oklahoma program that was very successful

#### President Don Dyear - College of Sequoias

- Education and training is the key to a successful workforce
  - ¾ of adults in Tulare County don't have higher education
  - 55% of graduating workforce do not pursue college
  - The current workforce is deficient in basic skills
- One problem to higher education is access
  - Community colleges are trying to develop centers that are more accessible to rural population
  - The Partnership should invest in Internet schooling
- Need to start talking to kids about college in their early years

#### Bob Williams - Tulare County Chiefs Association

- Street gangs and quality of life are the main issues for law enforcement in the Valley
- Crime rate is always a factor in buying a house
- Grant funding in working with gangs
  - Suppression and intervention efforts for controlling gangs are under funded

#### Bill Dulane - Tulare Workforce Investment Board

- Top priorities that will improve the future of economic prosperity and quality of life:
  - An educated, competent and confident workforce
- Vocational Training is necessary
- Unemployment is only one measure of rise or decline of a region
- Preparation for the high school exit exam is very important

#### George Finney Tulare County Association of Governments

- Promote cooperation between the Regional County Blueprint process and the Partnership
- There must be reform to CEQA
- Streamline the employment redevelopment projects

#### Panel Questions:

What is impeding the progress of Vocational Education?

Training is very expensive. Any assistance from the State is valuable to the community.

Problem is training people but there are no jobs, so the trained workforce leaves.

Is there a communication system established to promote jobs in the Valley?

Not necessarily, but there is a state wide registry. Vocational Education programs should focus on the available jobs in the area.

Education programs are not looking innovative and creative enough.

## **Business Panel**

Paul Saldana - Tulare County Economic Development Corporation

- The scope of work for the Partnership is sufficient to meet the Valley needs
- Projects that can help the economic vitality of the Valley are
  - Pooling of State and Federal funds for projects
  - The east/west corridors in the Valley are equally important to Highway 99
  - Update to regional water quality plan
- Statutory and Regulation changes to consider
  - State regulations create a hurdle to the Community Development Block Grant Program
    - Get rid of state regulations and use the federal guidelines only
- The top three priorities for the Valley:
  - Access to higher education
  - Infrastructure
  - Quality of life programs are essential to the workforce
    - Healthy family and healthy kids programs are essential to the Valley

Ralph Hines – Chamber of Commerce

- Protect agriculture because it is the food source for California and the nation
- Less regulation, less taxes and tort reform
- Create a job friendly environment

Mike Cully – Visalia Chamber of Commerce

- All the committees of the Partnership are reflective of the needs of the Valley
- What projects will promote the economic vitality of the Valley?
  - Focus on education
  - Create a business/education partnership
  - Public Health and Cleaner Water
- Foster the cornerstone business – Agriculture
- Air and Water regulations are the most important to the Valley
- The top three priorities for the Valley:
  - Cleaner environment
  - Better schools
  - Better transportation
- The Partnership must maintain an open communication for cooperation and collaboration

Brad Caudill – Executive Director Tulare County Farm Bureau

- 57% of California's agricultural production is from the Central Valley
- Encourage smart growth to protect farmland because the population will double by 2020
  - Consider as a model the Rural County Lands Plan in Tulare county
- Continue to fund the Williams Act
- Continue funding Californian Grown and Carl Moyer programs
- Encourage utilities companies to purchase excess energy produced by agriculture
  - Digesters used in dairies

- Bond Money raised for upgrades to infrastructure need to be used on upgrades
  - water storage

Gill \_\_\_\_\_ – Executive Director Tulare/Kings Chamber of Commerce

- Represents over 3,000 Hispanic businesses
- Unique challenges to Hispanic businesses:
  - Lack of training and education
  - First time business owners who are starting from scratch
  - Learning as they go along
  - Many owners speak limited to no English
- Restrictions placed on Community Block Grants need to be lifted
- The Valley as a whole needs to be an opportunity zone

### **Community Panel**

Ernie \_\_\_\_\_ - Non-profit Organization

- Community workgroup should be added to the panel

Caroline \_\_\_\_\_

- Top three priorities
  - Take actions that will cause a culture change so Californian workers can compete with China
  - Prepare infrastructure to match technology
    - Current factory style model is old
    - With technology getting better, jobs can be completed from anywhere
- Give priority to innovation and technology and provide broadband to all Valley residents
- Entrepreneurship should be integrated in K -12 education plans
- The Partnership should be entrepreneurial

Peter Carey – Housing

- Housing prices are sky rocketing through the Valley
  - Merced is the number 2 most unaffordable housing in the area
- Partnership should use their voice to promote affordable housing
- Most of the Valley is plagued by poor infrastructure and substandard housing
  - Resources should be focused on this area
- Suggests the current Partnership is a good model and that it should continue longer than one year

Brooke Frost – First Five

- The top three priorities for the Valley:
  - Broadband for all residents in the San Joaquin Valley
  - Change public policy and provide funding for health care
  - Create infrastructure and human resource investment for the region
- Health care for children has a direct affect on family finances

- Provide incentives for doctors and dentists to practice in the Valley
- Develop a strategy to increase preventive health care and avoid unnecessary emergency room
- The State needs to help leverage funds from the Federal Government